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A STUDY OF THE ACTUAL INFLUENCE OF THE
LINCOLN - DOUGLAS DEBATES.

by

Mary Gertrude Doherty

Thesis for the Degree of Bachelor of Arts in History

in the

College of Literature and Arts

of the

U N I V E R S I T Y O F I L L I N O I S

Presented June 1, 1908.

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I

SUMMARY OF POLITICAL CONDITIONS

1854 - 1858.

When Franklin Pierce in his inaugural address on March 4, 1853 expressed his belief that the compromise measures of 1850 were strictly constitutional and should be "unhesitatingly carried into effect"⁽¹⁾, he voiced the calm belief of the vast majority in the United States, North as well as South. They felt that the slavery question was at rest and that the character of the Territories as respected slavery was settled.⁽²⁾ They believed that slavery was in the course of ultimate extinction.

However, their optimism was to receive a severe blow. On January 4, 1854 Stephen A. Douglas, as chairman of the Committee on Territories, reported a bill into the Senate for the organization of the Territory of Nebraska.⁽³⁾ All the territory lay north of the line 30° 30' from which slavery had been excluded by the Missouri Compromise. The bill declared the Compromise of 1820 invalid as slavery was property recognized by the Constitution and therefore entitled to constitutional protection. This act was not to "legislate slavery into a territory or state or exclude it therefrom but was to leave the people thereof perfectly free to form and regulate their domestic institutions in their own way, subject only to the

(1) Rhodes: History of the United States; 1, 385.

(2) Ibid. 428.

(3) Ibid. 1, 420.

Constitution of the United States". By the skillful engineering of Douglas, the bill was passed through the Senate and House and approved by President Pierce.

Immediately the North awoke to the fact that the slavery question was still the living issue of the day,⁽¹⁾ and their hatred and dread of the institution were at once voiced in their strenuous opposition. That this opposition should take the form of a political party was urged by the New York Tribune and countenanced by Salmon P. Chase, Charles Sumner, and Benjamin F. Wade.⁽²⁾ Its platform was to be opposition to slavery and slavery extension. This platform would unite all who hated slavery as a social institution and those who feared the increasing political aggrandizement of the slave oligarchy. It drew its support principally from the Free-Soilers, the Whigs, and the Americans. Its power was strongest in the West, always favorable to a popular movement, where it early adopted the name of Republican.

That Douglas and his Act had stirred up discord was all the more evident in Kansas into which the North and South now flocked, each section thinking that it could thus gain the territory by popular sovereignty. As a consequence Civil War raged. Finally in October 1857, the anti-slavery element gained control, ratified a free constitution under which they sought admission into the Union. But the movement was defeated in the Senate.

The North felt more than ever that the slave power was

(1) Nicolay & Hay: Lincoln, I, 352.

(2) History of the United States, II, 45.

growing in influence and preponderance when, in March 1857, Chief Justice Taney delivered the Dred Scott Decision. The case involved the freedom of a negro, Dred Scott, who claimed his freedom from the fact that his master had held him in bondage in Illinois where slavery was prohibited by state law and in territory where slavery was forbidden by the Missouri Compromise of 1820. The point at issue was whether Dred Scott was a United States citizen. The court decided that no negro was or ever could be a citizen of the United States.⁽¹⁾ But Justice Taney thought it in his power to quiet the political excitement agitating the country and sustained by five judges uttered what is commonly known as the Dred Scott Decision.

In reference to the Territories, the opinion of the Court was that the Louisiana Territory "was acquired by the general government as the representative and trustee of the people of the United States, and it must therefore be held in that character for their common and equal benefit". "Property in slaves is a right expressly affirmed by the Constitution and nowhere in the Constitution is Congress given great power over that kind of property or permitted to protect it less than any other kind of property". Consequently the Missouri Compromise is unwarranted and void.

Among the Republicans the Dred Scott Decision created as much excitement as had the Nebraska Bill. They unhesitatingly asserted that they would not accept it and maintained as before that Congress had power over slavery in the Territory. The Democrats, on the other hand, lauded the decision and the justices that pro-

(1) Rhodes: History of the United States, II, 255.

nounced it. Douglas led the Northern party in its approval.⁽¹⁾

Meanwhile in Kansas a pro-slavery constitutional convention had drawn up a constitution favorable to slavery. The whole document was not submitted to the popular verdict but on December 21, 1857, the people were to vote for the constitution with slavery or in favor of the constitution with no slavery. In the latter case the dreaded institution was still protected in the organic act.

The North immediately became excited and the scheme was vigorously opposed. Douglas headed the opposition though threats were given out that patronage would be remorselessly used against those who resisted it. The final administration sanction was given February 21, 1858 when Buchanan in a message to Congress recommended the admission of Kansas under the Lecompton Constitution.⁽²⁾ In spite of Douglas and the Republicans the bill to admit Kansas was passed in the Senate. In the House it was passed by the aid of an amendment which, however, the Senate refused to accept.

Finally in the Committee of Conference the English Bill was brought forth. The Kansans were bribed by government lands and statehood to accept the Lecompton Constitution when submitted to a popular vote. If they refused, Kansas could not be admitted until it had the population requisite for a congressional representative. Douglas and the Republicans fought valiantly against the Bill but administration patronage won the day and it passed both Houses by a small majority.

(1) Rhodes: History of the United States, II, 264.

(2) Ibid. 291.

II

PRELIMINARIES OF THE SENATORIAL CONTEST.

The struggle between Douglas and the administration was not confined to Washington. In Illinois the same contest was being fought though between combatants much less conspicuous. Some time in the end of February Hon. Alexander Starne, chairman of the Illinois Democratic State Central Committee, issued a call for the Democratic Convention to be held at Springfield, April 21, 1858.⁽¹⁾ Immediately the question arose as to whether this convention was to support Douglas or the Administration. The consequence was that many counties had double delegations and a lively time was predicted by the Chicago newspapers.⁽²⁾

The Convention assembled at the State Court House on the appointed day at ten o'clock. By two o'clock the Illinois Democracy had divided and organized themselves into two separate conventions. the Douglas body large, harmonious, and exultant; the administration body boldly defiant and vindictive. The introduction of resolutions approving the course of Senator Douglas had wrought the havoc.⁽³⁾

The Douglas wing, representing ninety-eight counties made John Moore president and then postponed all further business till the committee of eleven on credentials should report. The dis-organized character of the convention is evident from the^{resolution submitted by} the committee:

(1) Sheahan, Douglas, 388.

(2) Chicago Press, April 20, 1858.

(3) Chicago Democrat, April 22, 1858.

"that whereas some counties have more delegates and others less than the number fixed by the State Central Committee, it is resolved that the delegates in attendance from such counties be authorized to cast in this convention the number of votes allotted to such counties by the State Central Committee". Permanent organization then followed.

The following day a platform was unanimously adopted. It began with a reassertion of the old principles avowed on former occasions in the presentation of candidates for suffrage. It declared an unalterable attachment to the Cincinnati platform of 1856, devotion to the Federal Union, and a desire to avert sectional strife, to maintain the sovereignty of the states and to protect them and the inhabitants thereof in all their constitutional rights. It asserted that a people had the right to decide at the polls in a fair election the character of their fundamental law and condemned the attempt of any convention called for the purpose of framing a constitution to impose the instrument framed by them upon the people against their own will. It approved and supported the Illinois delegation in Congress for their position under the admission of Kansas under the Lecompton Constitution and promised support to the administration in so far as it carried out the declarations of the Cincinnati platform.

Thus the convention though its platform pledged itself to the support of Stephen A. Douglas should his re-election be opposed though he was not renominated.⁽¹⁾

(1) Springfield State Journal, April 22, 1858.

Meanwhile the Buchanan wing, calling themselves the National Democratic State Convention and representing fifty-four counties of the state,^{(1) P. 6} organized in another room in the State House.⁽⁴⁾ They elected John Dougherty president and when speeches denouncing Douglas, had been made and credentials reported, adopted a platform the principal plank of which was support of the administration. The convention declared its adherence to the Cincinnati platform and to the belief that Territories are common property and therefore any citizen with or without his property might enter and enjoy them and that they should be admitted into the Union "with or without slavery as the people of each Territory may determine". It endorsed Douglas' sentiments expressed in his Springfield speech of June 12th that Kansas would speak for herself but condemned, "more in sorrow than in anger", his opposition to the administration in which they declared implicit confidence. They promised the other Democratic State Conventions that they would furnish an antidote that should neutralize the effects of the sectionalism which had been introduced into the party from Illinois. In conclusion they resolved that the convention would adjourn till June 8, 1858.

Consequently the Buchanan convention met again at Springfield,⁽²⁾ June 9th. The officers of the former convention were re-

- (1) Douglas in a speech in the Senate June 15, 1858, stated that the "bolters" numbered only thirty-seven. James Shean in his life of Douglas states thirty-nine were present "of which some twenty-three were from Chicago".
- (2) Illinois State Journal, June 10, 1858, Douglas in the speech referred to above states that this convention represented only fifteen or twenty counties and numbered a little over a hundred persons in all, nearly a half of whom came from Chicago.

tained though four members were added to the committees on credentials and resolutions. The latter reported substantially as they had in April. They reiterated their firm adherence to the Cincinnati platform especially in its condemnation of the agitation of slavery and decried all attempts from whatever quarter to modify or interpolate its doctrines. They once more condemned Douglas and upheld James Buchanan, the head of the Democracy, and his firm, consistent, dignified administration. In addition they declared that it was not consistent with Democratic principles for the Federal Government to inquire into the manner the people of a Territory or State had come to a decision concerning their domestic institutions. Then after the adoption of this platform and the nomination of some candidates for office, the convention adjourned.

On April 23, 1858, in the Illinois State Journal of Springfield appeared the official publication of the call for the Republican State Convention to be held at Springfield June 16th. On that day the body was called to order by N. B. Judd, chairman of the State Republican Central Committee, and the Honorable Richard Yates was chosen president pro tem. Committees on credentials and permanent officers were then named and the Convention adjourned till the afternoon.

The business of the second session consisted in the election of Honorable Gustavus Koerner as president and the acceptance of the reports of the committees on permanent officers and credentials. A committee composed of two from each Congressional district was then appointed to draft the State platform. When

(1) Illinois State Journal, June 17, 1858.

another State Central Committee had been chosen and nominations for various offices made, the Convention adjourned till five o'clock.

The principal business of this session was the report of the committee on resolutions. They embodied an affirmation of devotion to the Union, and the Constitution, to the principle of states rights and of non-interference with slavery where it already existed. However they declared that as this government was founded by freemen, the party would oppose the further extension of the institution. It condemned the "extra-judicial utterances" of the Supreme Court in the Dred Scott Case as heretical and maintained that Congress possessed sovereign power over the Territories and therefore had the right to govern and control them while they remained in a territorial condition. Moreover, it was the duty of the general government to protect the virgin country from the curse of slavery and to preserve the public domain for the occupation of free labor. Nor could any power on earth carry and maintain slavery in the states against the will of their people and the provisions of their constitution and laws. They also entered into the sphere of national affairs and assumed the positions taken by the National party on the slave-trade, internal improvements and foreign relations.

The adoption of these resolutions was followed by the unanimous adoption of a resolution "that Honorable Abraham Lincoln is our first and only choice for the United States Senate to fill the vacancy about to be created by the expiration of Mr. Douglas' term of office".

In the evening Lincoln delivered his famous nomination

⁽¹⁾ speech. It was to contain the fundamental argument of the contest for Douglas never lost a chance of quoting it and interpreting it to suit his purposes. It was here that Lincoln uttered his "prediction": "A house divided against itself cannot stand. This government cannot endure half slave and half free." He showed how the agitation which the Kansas-Nebraska Bill had promised to end, had not ceased but had augmented and stated that it was his firm belief that there would be no peace on the slavery issue till the Union had become all free or all slave. There is a tendency, he argued, for the nation to become all slave. Three advances had been made in this direction. The Nebraska Bill had destroyed the restrictions on slavery and had thrown open to it all the territories. The second advance was the popular endorsement, won by the doctrine of popular sovereignty, of this act in the election of President Buchanan. Then followed the Dred Scott Decision which destroyed the Nebraska Bill but which was upheld before and after it was pronounced by Senator Douglas the reputed author of the bill. He said he did not care whether slavery was voted up or down. Lincoln considered this declaration the third point gained in the nationalization of the institution. Douglas was trying to educate Northern sentiment not to care about the slavery question and to prepare it for a second decision by the Supreme Court that a state could not prohibit slavery. From the nature of the Nebraska act and the Dred Scott Decision, which Lincoln declared appeared as preconcerted acts, a niche was all ready for this decision when popular sentiment was ripe. Lincoln concluded his argument by insisting that Douglas could never be an

(1) Lincoln's Works, III, 1.

instrument of the Republican party. He viewed slavery as a mere question of property; to them it was a moral wrong to which no man could be indifferent.

Lincoln's conclusion was an answer to the Eastern Republicans who thought that Douglas, because of the stand he had taken with them against the administration on the Kansas issue, would soon unite with them in their fight against slavery extension. They deemed it only a question of time till Douglas would be a strong instrument of the Republican party. They feared that any opposition would prevent their reconciliation and drive Douglas back into the arms of slavery propagandists. As a consequence the foremost men of his party from whom Lincoln looked for the most encouragement and support, or a politician but as a rival of Douglas whom they wished to see re-elected.⁽¹⁾ This was especially true of Horace Greely, William H. Seward and Governor Banks. Their attitude was voiced in an editorial of the New York Tribune of June 24, 1858. "Illinois is to be the arena this year of a desperate contest which we would have gladly aided to avert. We do not say that this contest was not inevitable. We only fear that its efforts will be, as its tendency certainly is, to drive back a hundred thousand Illinois Democrats into a position of open alliance with and virtual subservancy to the Slave Power".

That Lincoln's attitude toward Douglas was wiser than that of his Eastern contemporaries is evident from the first speech which Douglas delivered in the campaign. On July 9th he arrived in Chicago from the East and in the evening addressed a large crowd in front of

(1) Herndon and Weik: Lincoln, II, 395.

(1)
the Fremont House. He declared his past, present, and future devotion to "that great fundamental principle of self-government that asserts the exclusive right of a free people to form and adopt their fundamental law and to manage and regulate their own internal affairs and domestic institutions". He rejoiced that the indications seemed to be that this doctrine had been adopted as a permanent rule of public policy in the organization of Territories and the admission of new states for in the Lecompton struggle in Congress he had been supported by Republicans and Americans of the North and some Americans and Whigs of the South. He stated that the sole objection he had had to the Lecompton Constitution was that it was not the act and deed of the people of Kansas. In this connection he pled that a Territory be allowed to decide their attitude on the slavery question as they were on taxation, banking, schools and the marriage relation.

He then attacked Mr. Lincoln's nomination speech. He declared that Lincoln had asserted as a fundamental principle of this government that there must be uniformity in the local laws and domestic institutions of each and all the states of the Union and as a consequence advocated a sectional war of extermination. Such uniformity, Douglas argued, was not desirable and was contrary to the plans of the Founders of the Government who had made the thirteen states sovereign and supreme within their own limits in regard to all that was local, internal and domestic. Lincoln would destroy

(1) Lincoln' Works, III, 14.

personal liberty and personal freedom and would establish a despotism under Congress. He criticized¹² Lincoln's attitude toward the Supreme Court decision which he himself considered as infallible and final. He asserted that Lincoln's objection to it was because it deprived negroes of privileges and rights which belong and ought to belong to white men alone and that Lincoln would appeal from it to a Republican Convention or Caucus. Douglas advocated a government on a white basis, with such rights, privileges, and immunities granted to the lower races as was consistent with the safety of society. He concluded by avowing his adherence to the Cincinnati platform and charging the Republicans with having formed an unholy and unnatural alliance with some of the Federal office holders.

The following night Abraham Lincoln on the solicitations of his friends answered Douglas.⁽¹⁾ He first denied that there was any alliance between the leaders of the Republican party and the Federal office holders and then turned his attention to popular sovereignty. Popular sovereignty, he pointed out, was different after the Dred Scott Decision than it had been before. In the first instance it meant the right of a people to govern themselves while they were squatted on a territory; but the Supreme Court had taken away from the people under a territorial government any power to exclude slavery until they formed a state constitution. Thus squatter sovereignty was reduced to the right of forming a state constitution with or without slavery, a principle as old as the Declaration of Independence which had never once been contested by the Republicans. Moreover, at that time, Lincoln argued,

(1) Lincoln's Works, III, 38.

if any slavery is present, experience has shown that it must be tolerated. He pointed out that it was the Republicans and not the Democrats who had defended this principle in Congress.

He denied that his nomination speech had been anything but a prediction of what might come to pass though he emphatically said he hated slavery and desired to see it put in the course of ultimate extinction. He admitted that the country had endured for eighty-two years half free and half slave but stated it as his firm belief that it had endured because all that time until the introduction of the Nebraska Bill the public mind rested in the belief that slavery was in the course of ultimate extinction. He asserted that such was the attitude of the framers of the Constitution and that the Republican party was but carrying out their wishes. He agreed with Douglas that diversity of local institutions made a nation stronger and denied that any state had a right to interfere with any other state or that he was inviting a war of sections. The reason Judge Douglas draws the inference he does, Lincoln explained, is because he considers slavery not a moral question but a little thing on a par with the question of whether a man shall pasture his land for cattle or plant it with tobacco. The vast proportion of the American people, however, look upon slavery as a vast moral evil -- an evil which is not confined to the states where it exists. Yet they agree that they have no right to interfere with it in those states where it exists.

He denied that he resisted the Dred Scott Decision. He would not accept it as a political rule and the Republicans would

try to have it reversed in a peaceable manner. He maintained that the sacredness which Judge Douglas threw around the Dred Scott Decision based on falsehood and not on fact, was a degree of sacredness which had never before been thrown around any other decision and which must be a new feeling to Judge Douglas.

He protested against that false logic which presumed that because he did not want a negro woman for a slave he must necessarily want her for a wife and declared that he wanted the black and white races separate as God had made them separate. He repeated that the Declaration of Independence included negroes as well as whites and not only whites of English stock as Douglas had maintained. If it does not include the negro, whom does it include, he asked. If it is not true, let us go to the statute books and tear it out. In conclusion he warned the Republicans that support of Douglas meant indifference to the slavery question, an attitude diametrically opposed to that of the Republicans which was peaceable opposition to the extension of slavery.

The next advance was made in the contest on July 10th when Douglas delivered in Bloomington a speech which was in the main very similar to his Chicago speech.⁽¹⁾ He recognized the Republican party as one of the two great national parties of the country and the one with whom the Democrats would have to contend in 1860. In his attack on the previous speeches of Lincoln he even went further than at Chicago. He declared that Lincoln would go to the Senate to carry out that line of public policy

(1) Lincoln's Works III, 67.

which would compel all the slave states to become free. He would accomplish this through an amendment to the United States Constitution which would destroy the state legislatures and the state sovereignty and confer all power on Congress to make local laws, establish domestic institutions, and police regulations. Douglas maintained that it was impossible to abolish slavery in this manner. It could be accomplished only by leaving a state perfectly free to regulate its own institutions. Since the advent of the Abolition Societies, he argued, emancipation had entirely ceased.

Douglas charged Lincoln with intending to form a northern sectional party, elect a northern president, form a northern cabinet, and administer the government by northern men only and deny all southern men any participation in the administration of affairs. He maintained that Lincoln desired to arraign Congress against the Supreme Court and the Court against Congress in his resistance to the Dred Scott Decision and to place northern partisan judges on the Supreme Bench to gain his ends.

He consoled Lincoln who feared that by the Dred Scott Decision slavery would go into all the Territories of the United States. He said it mattered not how the Dred Scott Decision settled the abstract question for with or without that decision slavery would go just where the people wanted it and not one inch further. "Slavery will never exist one day or one hour against the unfriendly legislation of an unfriendly people".

He again insisted that Lincoln argued for negro voters, office-holders, legislators, senators and Supreme Court judges and for the political and social equality of the negro. Douglas advanced one step in his interpretation of the Declaration of

Independence and included the Europeans as well as the English in the doctrine of equality.

The following day Mr. Douglas delivered in Springfield⁽¹⁾ a speech which was practically his Bloomington speech of the day previous only changed slightly as to order.

Abraham Lincoln replied to both these speeches at Springfield on the evening of July 17th.⁽²⁾ He first reminded the Republicans that they labored under two great disadvantages: first an old apportionment law much to the advantage of the Democrats and second, the political renown of Judge Douglas and the benefits to be reaped by supporting a man whom all considered as a future president of the United States.

He then attacked popular sovereignty, the "great staple of the campaign" and "the most arrant Quixotism ever enacted before a community". He asked what Judge Douglas meant when he said all the rest of his life would be devoted to a principle which the infallible Supreme Court had annihilated and crushed out. He deemed the Lecompton struggle a victory for the Republicans. He brought forward two more proofs of the prediction pronounced in his former Springfield speech that the tendency was to make slavery national. One was a statement of Mr. Brooks of So. Carolina that in his opinion when the Constitution was formed it was the belief of no man that slavery would last till 1850 but that men had become wiser and the perpetuity of slavery was a necessity. His second proof was a decision of a Virginia Supreme Court Judge that no negro could

(1) Lincoln's Works; III, 111.

(2) Ibid. 150.

make a choice between freedom and slavery although given permission to do so by his master.

Lincoln showed that Thomas Jefferson had feared just such an attitude towards the Supreme Court as Judge Douglas held because its tendency was to place the nation under an oligarchy. Moreover, when Douglas preached that the Court can say no wrong, he stood on a platform one plank of which was opposition to the Supreme Court on the National Bank question. He called attention to the fact that slavery was planted in the colonies against the wishes of the many because England would not prohibit it or allow the colonists to do so and pointed out that the same policy prevailed then in the Territories. He sarcastically showed that Douglas had shifted in his attitude toward the Declaration of Independence and denied that he had ever declared that negroes were equal to the whites in all respects but that they were equal to the whites in the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness,

III

CHALLENGE TO DEBATES

Thus the contest was already assuming the character of an extended debate. But Douglas was the far more conspicuous man of the two. He had long been popular in Illinois and his late heroics in Congress had magnified him as a popular hero. Moreover, as Lincoln said, what Douglas pronounced was regarded by the vast majority as gospel truth. Consequently the Republican leaders dreaded the result if Douglas continued to interpret the "unwise" utterances of Lincoln's nomination speech as a radical abolition doctrine. The tide of popular endorsement for Douglas was rising high. He addressed immense crowds and the Republicans felt that if Lincoln could refute his assertions on the same platform before the same audiences, some ground would be saved for Lincoln.

Consequently at the promptings of his friends Lincoln on the 24th of July sent Douglas a letter asking him if it would be agreeable for him to divide time and address the same audiences.⁽¹⁾ This was the usual and almost universal western style of conducting a political campaign and it had been justly held that the candidate who refused to speak in that way had no better reason for doing so than cowardice⁽²⁾. Douglas raised several objections yet finally in order to accomodate Lincoln⁽³⁾ he took upon himself the responsibility of making an arrangement for a discussion be-

(1) Lincoln's Works, III, 178.

(2) Chicago Press and Tribune, July 24, 1858.

(3) Lincoln's Works, III, 180.

tween them at one prominent point in each congressional district in the state except the second and sixth districts where they had both spoken and in each of which cases Lincoln had the concluding speeches.

Lincoln in his answer⁽¹⁾ denied that the advantage of having the closing speech at Chicago and Springfield had been on his side. He agreed, however, to the seven places named and to accept Douglas' dates provided he was immediately informed of what they were. As for the other details, he wished for perfect reciprocity and no more. He wished as much time as Douglas and that conclusions should alternate. Douglas immediately replied⁽²⁾ designating the time and places as follows:

Ottawa, La Salle County - August 21, 1858.
Freeport, Stephenson County - August 27, 1858.
Jonesboro, Union County - September 15, 1858.
Charleston, Coles County - September 18, 1858.
Quincy, Adams County - October 13, 1858.
Alton, Madison County - October 15, 1858.

He agreed to Lincoln's suggestion that they should alternately open and close the discussions and stated that he would speak at Ottawa one hour, Lincoln could then reply occupying an hour and a half, and he would then follow for half an hour. At Freeport Lincoln was to open the discussion and speak for an hour, Douglas would then follow for an hour and a half and Lincoln would reply for half an hour. They were to alternate in like manner in each successive place.

The bargain was closed by Lincoln's accepting the arrange-⁽³⁾

(1) Lincoln's Works III, 18.

(2) Ibid. 183.

(3) Ibid. 184.

ment although, as he wrote Douglas, "you take four openings and closes to my three"⁽²⁾.

- (2) Mr. E. E. Sparks in his work on the Lincoln-Douglas Debates states it as his opinion that Lincoln challenged Douglas to the joint debates to prevent Douglas' attention from being monopolized by Trumbull and his own political chances from being thus jeopardized.

IV.

THE FIRST JOINT DEBATE AT OTTAWA.

In accordance with this agreement the first discussion between the two candidates took place on Saturday, August 21st at Ottawa. The meeting was declared to have been the largest ever assembled in that locality. Not less than twenty-thousand persons were present. The correspondent of the Philadelphia Press wrote⁽¹⁾ "that the bare announcement that the two candidates were to meet in open debate was sufficient to bring together an immense crowd. A special train of fourteen passenger cars, filled to overflowing, came from Chicago. Another train of eleven cars came from Peru and La Salle; whilst delegations in wagons, carriages and on horse back came from all directions and aided to swell the great multitude.

The correspondent of the New York Post found the city crowded the night previous to the debate with men, women and children - old and young. Ottawa assumed a festive appearance. "Military companies were out; martial music sounded, and salutes of artillery thundered in the air. Eager marshalls in partisan sashes rode furiously about the streets. Peddlers were crying their wares at every corner and excited groups of politicians were canvassing and quarrelling everywhere."⁽²⁾

"Judge Douglas, the great champion and the invincible defender of the rights, liberties and institutions of free people,

(1) Philadelphia Press, Aug. 26, 1858 - Sparks.

(2) New York Post, August 27, 1858 - Sparks MS.

was met at the city of Peru, sixteen miles distant, by the committee in an elegant carriage drawn by four splendid horses and brought to Ottawa. Four miles out he was met by a delegation composed of several hundreds bearing flags and banners, and escorted into the city amid the booming of cannons, the shouts of thousands and the strains of martial music. As he neared the Geiger House, it was almost impossible for the carriages to force their way through the dense mass of living beings that blocked up the streets, and clung to the carriage containing the distinguished senator, anxious to clasp him by the hand, the shouts and cheers that arouse on his approach were deafening, when they reached the Geiger House and the carriage halted in the street there arose one spontaneous shout that seemed to rend the very air. Again and again did that shout go up, as the distinguished senator stood in the open carriage with head uncovered, gracefully bowing to the living mass of humanity that surrounded him on all sides, as soon as sufficient order could be restored, he was welcomed in a reception speech by H. W. H. Cushing, Esq. Judge Douglas was deeply affected and could scarcely restrain his emotions to reply"⁽¹⁾.

Mr. Lincoln was met at the depot by an immense crowd who escorted him to the residence of the mayor with banners flying and mottoes waving their unfaltering attachment to him and his cause."⁽²⁾

The first joint debate was to take place at two o'clock in Lafayette Square. Here a stand had been erected for the speakers,

(1) Philadelphia Press, August 26, 1858 - Sparks MS.

(2) New York Post, August 27, 1858 - Sparks MS.

the reporters and representatives of the press from all sections of the state. The people were obliged to stand crowded together under the blazing sun unprotected by any shade trees. Yet notwithstanding all this the crowd was already so dense when the speakers arrived that it was only with the greatest difficulty that they could make their way to the stand.

"Everybody knows Douglas, a short, thick set, burly man, with large round head, heavy hair, dark complexion, and fierce bull-dog bark. Strong in his own real power and skilled by a thousand conflicts in all the strategy of a hand to hand or a general fight. Of towering ambition, restless in his determined desire for notoriety, proud, defiant, arrogant, audacious, unscrupulous "Little Dug" ascended the platform and looked out impudently and carelessly on the immense throng which surged and struggled before him. A native of Vermont, reared on a soil where no slave ever stood, trained to hard manual labor and schooled in early hardships, he came to Illinois a teacher and from one post to another had risen to his present eminence. Forgetful of the ancestral hatred of slavery to which he was the heir, he had come to be a slave holder and to owe much of his fame to his continued subservience to southern influence."

"The other - Lincoln - is a native of Kentucky and of poor white parentage and from his cradle has felt the blighting influence of the dark and cruel shadow which rendered labor dishonorable and kept the poor in poverty. He left his native state, crossed the line into Illinois and began his career of honorable toil. At first a laborer, splitting rails for a living, deficient in education and applying himself even to the rudiments of know-

ledge, he, too, felt the expanding power of his American manhood and began to achieve the greatness to which he has succeeded. With great difficulty struggling through the tedious formularies of legal lore, he was admitted to the bar and rapidly made his way to the front ranks of his profession. Honored by the people with office, he is still the same honest and reliable man. He volunteers in the Black Hawk war, and does the state good service in her sorest need. In every relation of life, socially and to the state, Mr. Lincoln has always been the pure and honest man. In physique he is the opposite of Douglas. Built on the Kentucky type he is very tall, slender, and angular, awkward even in gait and attitude. His face is sharp, large featured, and unprepossessing. His eyes are deepset, under heavy brows; his hair is dark and heavy. In repose, I must admit that "Long Ab's" appearance is not comely. But stir him up, and the fire of genius plays on every feature. His eye glows and sparkles, every linament now, so ill-formed, grows brilliant and expressive, and you have before you a man of rare power, and a strong magnetic influence. He takes the people every time, and there is no getting away from his shrewd good sense, his unaffected sincerity, and the unceasing play of his good humor which accompanies his close logic and smooths the way to conviction. Listening to him on Saturday, calmly and unprejudiced, I was convinced that he had no superior as a stump speaker. He is clear, concise, and logical, his language is eloquent and at perfect command. He is altogether a more fluent speaker than Douglas, and in all the arts of debate fully his equal. The Republican⁽¹⁾ of Illinois have chosen a champion worthy of their heartiest support and fully equipped for the conflict.⁽¹⁾

(1) New York Post, August 27, 1858 - Spark's MS.

When Douglas⁽¹⁾ had eulogized the two great national parties, the Whig and the Democratic, who had stood together on the slavery question and in support of the glorious principle of popular sovereignty as embodied in the Nebraska Bill, he denounced the Republican party in Illinois. He exposed a contract between Lincoln and Trumbull to abolitionize the Whig and Democratic parties under the disguise of a Republican party and thus win seats in the Senate. It was because Trumbull had broken faith in 1854, he claimed, that Lincoln was the first and only choice of the Republican party in Illinois. He produced a radical abolition platform laid down by Lincoln and Trumbull and adopted by a Republican State Convention in 1854. He asked Lincoln if he would stand by it after four years had passed. He propounded seven questions to Lincoln which would, ~~he if~~ answered in the affirmative, bind him to a radical anti-slavery program. They were in substance: Does Lincoln stand pledged to-day, as he did in 1854, for the unconditional repeal of the Fugitive Slave Law, and against the admission of any more slave states or of a new state with such a constitution as the people may see fit to make? Does he still stand for the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia and for the prohibition of the slave trade between states and of slavery in the territories? Is he still opposed to the acquisition of more territory unless slavery is prohibited therein?

Lincoln denied that such a coalition as Douglas charged had ever existed or that he or Trumbull had had anything to do with the resolutions which Douglas had read. To show the views he held in 1854 he read from a speech of that time in which he

(1) Lincoln's Works, III, 185.

opposed the repeal of the Missouri Compromise because it let slavery go into all the territories and because it was the expression of a declared indifference on the slavery issue; but he upheld the Fugitive Slave Law as a constitutional right of the South. He thus answered only the first question of Douglas.

He again denied any right or inclination on the part of the North to interfere with slavery in the South or of introducing political and social equality between the whites and the blacks but boldly announced that the negro in the right to eat the bread without the leave of anybody else which his hands had earned was the equal of Judge Douglas and every living man. He admitted again that variety in local institutions makes a house united and not divided but held that slavery could not be considered among these varieties as it had always been an element of division. He pointed out that when slavery was in the course of ultimate extinction as the Fathers had placed it, a sectional war had not ensued. He argued that popular sovereignty gave the people the right to have slavery if they wanted it but not the right to have it if they did not want it. He asked Douglas if the Nebraska Bill was not a step in the nationalization of slavery, why the Chase Amendment stating that the people of a territory might exclude slavery was defeated in the Senate. Douglas replied that it had been voted down because Chase would not amend it so as to provide that the people of a territory might either prohibit or introduce slavery.

Lincoln also demanded why the Nebraska Bill stated that it was not its intent to legislate slavery into any territory or state if it was not to prepare for another Supreme Court decision. Douglas explained that the word "state" was inserted to prevent any abolition doctrine such as Mr. Lincoln upheld that there should

be no more slave states but that the people should be free to come in as they pleased.

Lincoln restated his position on the Dred Scott Decision and told Douglas he had never before held a Supreme Court Decision so sacred. He reminded him of the time that he had been one of the five judges added to the Supreme Bench of Illinois in order to reverse a decision.

V.

THE SECOND JOINT DEBATE AT FREEPORT.

The following Friday, August 27th, before a crowd one-third larger than at Ottawa the most momentous debate of the series took place at Freeport, in a strong anti-slavery district. Lincoln opened the discussion.⁽¹⁾ He at once turned his attention to the seven questions propounded to him by Douglas at Ottawa. In answer to the first he declared that he was not then or ever had been in favor of the unconditional repeal of the Fugitive Slave Law. He held that a Congressional Fugitive Law was the constitutional right of the people of the southern states and though he thought the existing law ought to have been framed so as to have freed it from some objections that pertained to it, he would not start that agitation then.

He denied that he was pledged against the admission of any more slave states or of a state with such a constitution as the people might see fit to make. He confessed that he would be exceedingly glad to know that there would not be another slave state admitted though he added that if slavery was kept out of a territory during its territorial existence and then the people fairly adopted a slave constitution, Congress could not prohibit them.

He stated that he did not stand pledged to the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia though he would like to see

(1) Lincoln's Works, III, 243.

it abolished there and thought Congress had the power to do so. However, he did not favor Congressional Abolition unless it was gradual, with the consent of the majority of qualified voters in the District, and with compensation to unwilling owners.

He did not stand pledged to the prohibition of an intra-state slave trade; he did not know if Congress had the power to prohibit it, but if it did, he would favor the exercise of it only on some conservative principle. He admitted that he was impliedly, if not expressly pledged to a belief in the right and duty of Congress to prohibit slavery in all the Territories of the United States, north as well as south of the Missouri Compromise line. He said he was not generally opposed to the honest acquisition of territory though his attitude on any special question would be influenced by whether or not the slavery question would be effected.

He then turned to Douglas and asked him four questions. The first was: "If the people of Kansas shall, by means entirely unobjectionable in all other respects adopt a state constitution and ask for admission into the Union under it before they have the requisite number of inhabitants according to the English Bill, will you admit them?" Douglas replied that though it was contrary to his belief in equal treatment of free and slave states he would stand by the exception made by Congress in the form of the English Bill. However, the rule must now be applied to all other territories alike.

Lincoln's second question was: Can the people of a United States Territory in any lawful way against the wish of any citizen of the United States exclude slavery from its limits prior to the

formation of a state constitution? "Douglas answered, as he had previously at Bloomington and Springfield, that the people of a territory can by lawful means exclude slavery from their limits prior to the formation of a state constitution." It matters not what way the Supreme Court may decide as to the abstract question whether slavery may or may not go into a territory under the Constitution, the people have the lawful means to exclude it as they please, for the reason that slavery cannot exist a day or an hour anywhere unless it is supported by local police regulations. If the people are opposed to slavery, they will elect an unfriendly legislature who by unfriendly legislation will effectually prevent the introduction of it into their midst."

The third interrogatory as to whether Douglas would accept as a political rule a Supreme Court decision that a state could not exclude slavery, the Senator passed by with a sneer. Lincoln, he said, was casting an imputation on the Supreme Court by supposing that they would violate the Constitution. In reply to Lincoln's fourth question, Douglas declared himself in favor of perpetual expansion with no regard whatever as to its effects on the slavery issue.

Lincoln took exception to Douglas' explanation of the rejection of the Chase Amendment. He argued that it was contrary to the facts of the case; Cass did not try to amend it nor did he vote on it. Douglas replied that as the Nebraska Bill had given all the power it was possible for Congress to give to a Territorial Legislature with no exception or limitation on the slavery question, Chase could add nothing by his amendment which was introduced to make political capital.

The resolutions which Douglas read at the previous debate, Lincoln declared, were passed at some meeting in Kane County and that there was no Republican State Convention at Springfield in 1854. Nevertheless, Douglas argued, this platform was adopted in nearly every county that gave a Black Republican majority for the Legislature and the men who voted for Lincoln in 1854 had pledged themselves to similar radical abolition sentiments and to vote only for a man who would sustain them. Lincoln then replied that in 1854 all Anti-Nebraska men united in opposition to a policy that seemed to tend toward the perpetuation of slavery. However the measures to be used in that opposition varied with the locality and it was not till 1856 that a common platform was adopted to which all Republicans were bound.

VI.

THE THIRD JOINT DEBATE AT JONESBORO.

When the two rival candidates met the third time in joint debate, it was in a locality different in every respect from Ottawa and Freeport. Jonesboro was in the midst of an agricultural district. It was to a rural population that Lincoln and Douglas spoke on the fifteenth of September. Yet the crowd was larger than at Ottawa and nearly equal to the one at Freeport, both situated in a thickly populated portion of the state. The Democratic party held sway. Republicans were looked upon as Dis-Unionists and Amalgamationists. Before such a community Lincoln, branded by Douglas as an advocate of political and social equality for the negro, met his opponent for the third time. Douglas had the opening speech.⁽¹⁾ In it he combined all the principal points of his previous speeches. Both he and Lincoln spent considerable time wrangling over the Ottawa resolutions. Lincoln if he hoped at all for election had to free himself from all charges of being identified with such radical abolitionist principles. On the other hand Douglas would make immense political capital if the people accepted his statement as to the soundness of the platform as Republican doctrine.

Lincoln varied his speech by a criticism of the answers given by Douglas to the first and second questions propounded at Freeport. He said he was not entirely sure of Douglas' position

(1) Lincoln's Works, III, 306.

on the admission of Kansas but he would thereafter assume that Douglas would disregard the English Bill.

All his scorn was devoted to the second answer of Douglas which was later to be known as the Freeport heresy. He fully realized how this doctrine would be received by men with strong southern sympathies and consequently he subjected it to the closest scrutiny. He pointed out that in 1850 when Douglas was asked if the people of a territory could exclude slavery he had said that was a question for the Supreme Court to decide and now when the decision had come, he made it a question for the people. "I hold", he declared, "that the proposition that slavery cannot enter a new country without police regulations, is historically false. It did not hold in the case of Dred Scott in Minnesota Territory. There is at least one matter of record as to a negro having been in the territory not only without police regulations, but in the teeth of Congressional legislation supposed to be valid at that time. This shows that there is vigor enough in slavery to plant itself in a new country even against unfriendly legislation. It takes not only laws but the enforcement of the laws to keep it out and would the United States Courts apply such a remedy?"

Lincoln went even further. He stated that the members of a Territorial Legislature who had sworn to support the Federal Constitution would be committing perjury if they passed such unfriendly legislation. Lastly, he argued that any member of the United States Congress who held as Judge Douglas did that this decision properly construed the Constitution, would be no less than a perjured man if he would refuse in Congress to give such

protection to that property as in its nature it needed.

He then proposed to Douglas his fifth interrogatory:

"If the slave-holding citizens of a United States Territory should need and demand Congressional legislation for the protection of their slave property in such Territory would you, as a member of Congress vote for or against such legislation? Douglas answered that it was a fundamental article in the Democratic creed that there should be non-interference or non-intervention by Congress with slavery in the territories. He then turned and asked Lincoln if he would vote for a territorial slave code as he, as well as every one else, was bound by the decision of the Court. Douglas took exception to Lincoln's attitude toward the admission of more slave states. He declared it applied only to a given case which Lincoln knew did not exist in any one territory of the Union.

VII

THE FOURTH JOINT DEBATE AT CHARLESTON.

Three days later the two contestants for the Senatorial seat met in the central portion of the state at Charleston. Here, Lincoln⁽¹⁾ turned aside from the main issues between himself and Douglas to consider a charge brought against Douglas by Trumbull and for which Douglas said he would hold Lincoln accountable. Trumbull, supported by Senator Bigler, charged that Douglas had been one in a plot to have the constitution of Kansas put in force without giving the people a chance to vote on it. He maintained that an enabling act for the Territory of Kansas was presented to the Senate by Mr. Toombs and that it contained a clause which implied popular approval of the constitution. This bill was referred to the Committee on Territories of which Douglas was chairman, where it was agreed that the submission clause would not be inserted and therefore was withdrawn.

Douglas, as was natural, declared the charge to be false and bolstered up by forged testimony. He stated that Bigler had retracted his statements, that there had been no clause in the Toombs Bill requiring submission to the people. No enabling act had ever required the submission of a constitution to popular vote. The constitutional convention was given power to order all elections it chose and therefore had full power to order a ratifying election.

The remainder of the speeches was devoted to an attack by Douglas and a defence by Lincoln of the principles set forth at Springfield, June 17, 1858.

(1) Lincoln's Works, IV, 1.

VIII

THE FIFTH JOINT DEBATE AT GALESBURG.

As Lincoln said in his reply to Judge Douglas,⁽¹⁾ a very large portion of the latter's opening speech at Galesburg had already been delivered and put in print. The original parts may be summed up in Douglas' retort: "I wish I could say the same of Lincoln's." He maintained that Lincoln changed his views with the locality in which he spoke and compared a portion of his Chicago speech on the Declaration of Independence with part of his Charleston speech on the same subject. In the former paragraph Lincoln said all men were created equal, in the second, that there were physical differences in the white and black races which would forever prevent their living together on terms of social and political equality.

Lincoln answered that he would have gained nothing by such tactics as he knew all his speeches were to be published and could very easily be compared. He argued that the equality of the Declaration of Independence which meant the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness did not mean political and social equality. He told Douglas that he could very easily find contradictions of the kind he produced in the same speech. He stated that no man had put Judge Douglas' interpretation on the Declaration of Independence previous to 1854.

He flatly contradicted Douglas' statement that the Kansas-

(1, Lincoln's Works, IV, 92.

Nebraska Bill was in accordance with the principles embodied in the Compromise of 1850. The latter could not serve as a pattern because it was a compromise.

The most interesting point that Lincoln raised was the distinction between the Democratic and Republican party. He said it was not as Douglas said that the Republicans were in the habit of making odious distinctions between free and slave states but between freedom and slavery. The Republicans regarded the institution as a moral evil, the Democrats did not. He again warned the people that support of the Democrats in their blind approval of the Dred Scott Decision because it was a decision of the Supreme Court and not because it was morally or politically sound, was only paving the way for another decision which would introduce slavery into all the states. He called their attention to the dangers which threatened the liberties and national greatness of the American people if Douglas' policy of perpetual expansion was upheld as it was a question not directly in the hands of the people.

IX

THE SIXTH JOINT DEBATE AT QUINCY.

There was no advance made in the Quincy debate which⁽¹⁾ took place before a small audience on October 13th. The old points were once more emphasized - Lincoln again insisted that the Republicans had no intention of interfering with slavery in the states where they had no constitutional right to do so or in the District of Columbia where they could. Douglas then declared that as slavery would be perpetual and since Lincoln had no intention of interfering with it in the states evidently his policy was to confine it to the states where it already existed and by the starvation of the negro to extinguish it.

(1) Lincoln's Works, IV, 152.

X

THE SEVENTH JOINT DEBATE AT ALTON.

The last debate⁽¹⁾ of the series was a repetition of the one just previous and of all the principal arguments of the campaign. At the close of his first speech, Douglas assumed a strong southern position. He maintained that the northern sectional party arose when the equilibrium in Congress was destroyed by the admission of California for then the North felt that they could control the government. Lincoln replied that the agitation had spread from the agitation of those who would extend slavery. He argued that it was not merely a party question. A party question could not make a disturbance outside of political circles. It does not rend churches. It was a moral question. However, Douglas answered that slavery was not the only disturber of the peace of the Union. Tariff, nullification and disunion had their day.

(1) Lincoln's Works, IV, 215.

XI

PUBLIC INTEREST IN THE CONTEST.

From the nomination of Abraham Lincoln in June till the election closed in November Illinois was in a state of intense excitement. All newspapers outside the state commented on it. Some declared that in this respect the contest surpassed any other ever carried on in the country. Very early in the campaign the New York Post stated⁽¹⁾ that Illinois was the theatre of the most momentous political contest where the eminence of the contestants, or the consequence which might result from it be considered, that had ever occurred in the country in any state canvass since the defeat^{of} Silas Wright for governor in 1846. The Illinois' correspondent of the New York Tribune in a racy letter to his paper wrote:⁽²⁾

"The political excitement in this state is tremendous. No previous canvass ever came up to it. The presidential contest of '56 was calm in comparison. The whole population - female as well as male - are excited. The central counties first opened the ball by a series of monster meetings. Within a fortnight the excitement in the center broke into the northern counties which will soon be at the fever heat of the central counties. The political furor has even made its appearance in Lower Egypt."

Some mention has already been made of the immense crowds

(1) New York Post, July 13, 1858 - Spark's MS.

(2) New York Tribune, August 12, 1858.

that assembled to hear Lincoln and Douglas at Ottawa and Freeport. This indicates in a measure the interest which the urban population took in the contest as a large number of the audiences at those debates came from the adjacent cities and towns. Yet the interest was not confined to this class by any means. The reporter of an eastern newspaper comments⁽¹⁾ on the large attendance at Jonesboro which was greater than the first debate at Ottawa and almost equal to the second debate at Freeport. He called attention to the fact that this "proved the interest which the campaign was taking on. Here in a rural district with only one railroad and one special train, the turnout of the populace has ranked with the great meetings in the thickly settled portions of the state, intersected by railroads and steamboat routes all pouring their special trains upon a common center. The prairies are aflame and all parties partake of the general enthusiasm."

The newspapers devoted practically their entire space to the publication of the various speeches and to comments on them. The name of the senatorial candidate favored and the dates of the important speeches he was to make headed the editorial column. An interesting statement which give some insight into the part which the papers played in the furthering of the campaign is found in the Chicago Press and Tribune of August 24th. The paper states that an "extra edition of the Ottawa debate consisting of two thousand copies was sold before nine o'clock and a third edition was printed and sold during the day."

(1) New York Post, September 21, 1858, Sparks' MS.

The Republican papers emphasized two points especially in their editorials. The first was the "Ottawa forgery" which was the name applied to the presentation by Douglas of the Kane County Republican Platform of 1854 as the Illinois State Republican Platform of that year. They spared no words in expressing their contempt for a "cause which had its origin in humbug and had to be bolstered up by lies without number and frauds without end" and for a United States Senator who "stooped to conduct which if practiced upon an individual for the sake of gain would consign him to a cell in the County Jail."⁽¹⁾ The following clipping from the Springfield Journal is typical of the criticism that Douglas' act brought forth.⁽²⁾ "There never was a political scheme of ~~any~~ such groveling and devilish meanness and malignity as that concocted by Douglas and his bottle-holders and sought to be palmed upon the people in regard to the bogus resolutions of the Republican State Convention of 1854. It was so brazen faced, so glaring, so reckless that the conspirators might have known that they would be discovered: but they expected it would answer all their purposes for the campaign before it could be found out and then, of course, they cared not for the consequences. Mr. Douglas who seems to have lost all regard for truth, political honesty or manly and honorable warfare, may expect to benefit himself by such a course; but we doubt not the people of Illinois who despise villainy wherever it may raise its head, will brand it as it deserves. Forgery

(1) Chicago Press and Tribune, August 23, 1858.

(2) Quoted in Chicago Democrat, September 4, 1858.

is forgery, whether it be a note of hand or a political manifesto, and in all honorable minds the guilt and infamy of the one is no less horrible and damning than the other".

Their insistence on this point became less and less when they learned of Douglas' answer to the second question propounded to him at Freeport by Lincoln. Their attitude toward the doctrine of unfriendly legislation was very similar to that expressed by their candidate in the later speeches in the Joint Debates. They declared it fallacious,⁽¹⁾ the meanest possible way to get rid of the Dred Scott Decision,⁽²⁾ an appeal from the Supreme Court to a Justice of the Peace among a few squatters,⁽³⁾ and an intimation that the Federal Government could not protect property within its own jurisdiction.

The Democratic papers took their cue from Douglas. Like him they declared that Lincoln was an Abolitionist and Amalgamationist and that he changed in his doctrines as he went from one part of the state to another. The Chicago Times had many bitter columns on these subjects. That their charges were utterly false can be readily seen by comparing a typical editorial⁽⁴⁾ of the Douglas organ in Chicago with Lincoln's speeches in the campaign.

(1) Chicago Press and Tribune, August 30, 1858.

(2) Ibid., September 6, 1858.

(3) Ibid., September 9, 1858.

(4) Chicago Times, October 3, 1858.

(5) There is no mention of this whatsoever in the nomination speech.

in June 5) P. 44

"At Springfield, Lincoln denied the right and authority of any law to take from a man the proceeds of his own labor and give them to another man styled a master. And he was utterly opposed to any legislation which had not for its object the elevation of the negro as nearly as possible to the perfection of political and social equality with the white man. At Springfield talking to an audience exclusively Republican, he bewailed⁽¹⁾ the said condition of the slaves of the South and the cruel oppression of slavery and in two months thereafter in the second discussion with his opponent, being fearful of losing the office he sought he declared his entire willingness to allow the Fugitive Slave Law to remain untouched in order, if any slave should escape into Illinois on their way to a land of freedom they might be captured and sent back to finish their lives in bondage. At Ottawa⁽²⁾ ⁽³⁾

(1) A very strong statement. Lincoln in his effort to prove that the tendency was for slavery to become national stated a decision of a Supreme Court Judge of Virginia that a negor had no legal power to choose though given permission to do so by his master and though his freedom depended on it. (Lincoln's Works, III, 167.)

(2) The emphasis has been altered with the consequent result that the meeting was changed also. What Lincoln said was - "Under the Constitution of the United States, the people Southern States are entitled to a Fugitive Slave Law. I think the present Fugitive Slave Law should have been so framed as to free it from some of the objections that pertain to it, without lessening its efficiency. And inasmuch as we are not now in an agitation in regard to an alteration or modification of that law, I would not be the man to introduce it as a new subject of agitation upon the general question of slavery." (Lincoln's Works, III, 246.)

(3) Chicago Times, October 13, 1858.

with his competitor he addressed the people. He had, in the meantime, been among the people and he found that the support that he was drawing from the Washington Union and the hirelings claiming to represent Mr. Buchanan was not compensated by the loss of old Whigs who did not relish negro equality. Hence at Ottawa he did not know ⁽¹⁾ whether he was for negro-equality or not - for "he was attending court Tazewill" when that plank was put in his platform and he was not prepared to say whether he was white or black.

Again at Freeport he met his antagonist and by this time he had been able to get his negro feelings once more and forthwith he was for the universality of political privileges - the equality of the negro with the white man. ⁽²⁾ He had, however, changed color in other respects. He would, he said, vote for the admission of slave states, ³⁾ he would resist all efforts to repeal

(1) The charge is false. "I have no purpose to introduce political and social equality between the white and black races. There is a physical difference between the two, which, in my judgement, will probably forever forbid their living together upon the perfect equality." (Lincoln's Works, III, 209.)

(2) Not mentioned by Lincoln at Freeport.

(3) "If slavery shall be kept out of a territory during the territorial existence of any one given territory, and then the people shall, having a fair chance and a clear field, when they come to adopt a constitution, do such an extraordinary thing as adopt a slave constitution, uninfluenced by the actual presence of the institution among them, I see no alternative, if we own the country, but to admit them into the Union." (Lincoln's Works, III, 247.)

the Fugitive Slave Law,⁽¹⁾ and he did not know, though he thought it likely, that he would submit to the Dred Scott Decision.⁽²⁾

Down to Jonesboro speeded Mr. Lincoln on the 15th of September and lo, the black man's friend, the negro-equality champion, the Defender of the Declaration of Independence, and the hero of political rights, avowed himself as "a white man", a member of the "white man's party", and one who would never admit a negro to a political privilege;⁽³⁾ and warmed up by these sentiments so new upon his lips he hurried up to Charleston and there on the 18th of September actually endorsed the Dred Scott Decision by declaring a negro was not a citizen of the United States⁽⁴⁾ and that if the Supreme Court had decided that Illinois could make negroes citizens, he would resist the exercise of such power by this state.

The next appearance of Mr. Lincoln was at Galesburg, the center of Abolitionism in this state. He had damaged himself extensively enough in the estimation of the Abolitionists in his Jonesboro and Charleston speeches and they insisted that he should recant and put on the black garb of negro equality once more. He

(1) The falsity of this statement can be easily proved by comparing Lincoln's utterances at Ottawa and at Freeport on the Fugitive Slave Law. At Ottawa - "I would give them any legislation for the reclaiming of their fugitives, which should not, in its stringency, be more likely to carry a free man into slavery than our ordinary criminal laws are to hang an innocent one." (Works, III, 208.) At Freeport: "The people of the southern states are entitled to a Congressional Fugitive Slave Law. (Works, III, 246)

(2) Not mentioned by Lincoln at Freeport.

(3) Not mentioned at Jonesboro.

(4) Another fabrication: - "The different states have the power to make a negro a citizen under the Constitution of the United States, if they choose. The Dred Scott Decision decides that they have not that power. If Illinois had that power, I should be opposed to the exercise of it." (Works, IV, 57.)

did so and behold the white man of Jonesboro and the Dred Scottite of Charleston came forth at Galesburg clothed in the habiliments of Uncle Tom, praying the admission of his colored brethren to the rights and privileges of white men.⁽¹⁾ He speaks at Quincy to-day and at Alton on Friday and the regalia of the negroes' friend will be thrown aside, and he will clamor again against the negro race and the ridiculous^{idea} of their ever becoming citizens."

But this excitement and interest was not confined to Illinois. It extended throughout the whole American people who were, as the New York Tribune remarked,⁽²⁾ "virtually deeply interested though not intensely excited auditors". On the other hand, this interest, though generally greatly augmented, was entirely awakened by the Joint Debates. Several newspapers in June predicted a "desperate contest" and all the prominent newspapers had reporters on the scene early in the fight.⁽³⁾ The New York Tribune⁽⁴⁾ attributed this "general and profound interest" to the eminent ability and ardent passions of Mr. Douglas which must always excite attention to any struggle in which he may be engaged, to his position as the object of executive animosity, and the uncertain character of his future relations with the democratic party."

(1) What Lincoln said was: "I have all the while maintained that in so far as it should be insisted that there was an equality between the white and black races that should produce a perfect social and political equality, it was an impossibility. And with it, I have said that in their right to "life, libery and the pursuit of happiness" as proclaimed in that old Declaration, the inferior races are our equals." (Works, IV, 116.)

(2) New York Tribune, November 9, 1858.

(3) Villard, Memoirs, 91.

(4) Quoted in the Chicago Democrat, September 4, 1858.

However this interest soon passed from the man to the Joint Debates. The New York Tribune, the influential newspaper of the East, published in full the Ottawa, Freeport and Alton speeches, and summarized others. The other newspapers if they did not publish the entire debates, outlined the arguments and quoted at length. All the journals commented fully on all the points raised. They ^{all} considered the campaign of paramount importance. The New York Post ⁽¹⁾ of August 13, 1858 states: "Illinois is regarded as the battle ground of the year and the results of this contest are held to be of the highest importance to the welfare of the country and the success of the great contending parties."

The Louisville Democrat ⁽²⁾ considered the debate in Illinois the ablest and most important that had ever taken place in any of the states on the great question which had so long agitated the country, elected and defeated Presidential candidates, built up and broken down parties. It was the opening of the question for 1860. The Missouri Republican ⁽³⁾ declared the whole country was looking on the contest with intense interest. The Frankfort Kentucky Commonwealth held the same opinion. ⁽⁴⁾ "Whether viewed in reference to its political results upon the country at large, or in reference to the ability displayed by the respective candidates, the canvass now going on in Illinois between Judge Douglas

(1) Sparks' MS.

(2) Louisville Ky. Democrat, September 5, 1858. Sparks' MS.

(3) Missouri Republican, September 2, 1858. Sparks' MS.

(4) Frankfort Ky. Commonwealth, August 24, 1858. Sparks' MS.

and Honorable Abraham Lincoln for the United States Senate is the canvass for the year 1858."

If the Burlington, Iowa, State Gazette ⁽¹⁾ may be believed, this excitement lasted to the very close of the campaign. "What a night next Tuesday will be over all the Union! The whole nation is watching with the greatest possible anxiety for the result of that day. No state has ever fought so great a battle as that which Illinois is to fight that day. Its result is big with the fate of our Government, and the Union and the telegraph wires will be kept hot with it until the result is known all over the land."

There are a few instances which portray this foreign interest even more vividly than the newspaper clippings. One is a letter to the Chicago Times ⁽²⁾ from Rutland, Vermont, telling of the interest throughout New England. Then by way of showing his own confidence in the result, the correspondent enclosed schedule of bets he had already made on the outcome of the election. He had staked \$500.00 that Lincoln would not be elected, \$500.00 that Douglas would be elected, and \$500.00 that Douglass would have a majority of ten on a joint ballot.

The others are the excursions to Alton and Quincy from Iowa and Missouri. An excursion by boat was made from Keokuk, Ia., to Quincy and from St. Louis to Alton. Evidently the latter was a great success. Two boats were run, the Baltimore and the White Cloud and the latter boat alone carried three hundred passengers to the last Joint Debate³.

- (1) Burlington, Ia., State Gazette, October 29, 1858. Sparks' MS
- (2) Chicago Times, October 8, 1858.
- (3) Missouri Democrat, October 16, 1858. Sparks' MS.

Of like nature was the excursion to Quincy from Lineus, Mo.. A letter written to the editor of the Quincy Herald⁽¹⁾ best tells the story.

"Lineus, Linn Co., Mo. September 25, 1858.

Austin Brooks, Dear Sir:

The people in northern Missouri are taking a lively interest in the canvass in Illinois between Judge Douglas and Mr. Lincoln, and the Democrats are wishing success to the "Little Giant".

Although Lineus is one hundred and twenty miles from Quincy there are many here making preparations to go to Quincy and be there on the 13th of next month at the speaking. It is a long way to travel to hear a man speak where we have to stage it nearly half the way, but such is the enthusiasm of the people, and their curiosity to hear the exponent of popular sovereignty that from five thousand to ten thousand will go from Missouri to be there on the occasion."

(1) Quincy Herald, September 29, 1858, Sparks' MS.

In my very limited study of the subject I found that the following fifty-three newspapers made some mention of the debate. These are distributed among thirty-five different towns. All the states east of the Mississippi are represented except Rhode Island, New Jersey, Delaware, Florida, Tennessee and Michigan. New Jersey, without doubt, depended upon the New York papers for their enlightenment and as all the other southern papers took such a keen interest in the struggle, it is safe to believe that those of Tennessee and Florida did also, though I found no proof of their doing so. The same most likely is true of Michigan and Rhode Island.

Portmouth (N.H.) Gazette
Concord (N.H.) Independent
Hartford (Conn.) Press
Springfield (Mass.) Republican.
Lowell (Mass.) Journal and Courier
Lowell (Mass.) Citizen and News
Boston (Mass.) Daily Traveler
Boston (Mass.) Daily Advertiser

Boston (Mass.) Daily Courier
New York Herald
New York Times
New York Tribune
New York Post
New York Anti-Slavery Standard
New York Express
Buffalo (N. Y.) Republic and Times
Buffalo (N. Y.) Courier
Rochester (N. Y.) Democrat
Washington (D. C.) Republic
Washington (D. C.) Union
Washington (D. C.) Star
Philadelphia (Pa.) North American
Philadelphia (Pa.) Press
Richmond (Va.) Enquirer
Norfolk (Va.) Argus
Baltimore (Md.) Sun
Wilmington (N.C.) Journal
Charleston (S. C.) Mercury
Columbia (S. C.) Guardian
Columbus (Ga.) Register
The Federal Union - Georgia
The Missippian
The New Orleans Delta
Louisville (Ky.) Journal
Louisville (Ky.) Democrat
Frankfort (Ky.) Commonwealth
Missouri Democrat
St. Louis (Mo.) News and Intelligence
St. Louis (Mo.) Morning Herald
St. Louis (Mo.) Evening News
Burlington (Ia.) State Gazette
Burlington (Ia.) Hawkeye
Keokuk (Ia.) Gate City
Indianapolis (Ind.) Sentinel
The Indiana Journal
New Albany (Ind.) Ledger
Centerville (Ind.) Times
Ohio Statesman
Cincinnati (O.) Commercial
Cincinnati (O.) Gazette
Sandusky (O.) Commercial Register

XII.

THE EFFECTS OF THE SENATORIAL CONTEST.

The interest in the contest both in Illinois and in the rest of the Union became more and more intense as the second of November drew near. When it arrived it decided the struggle as every good Democrat had desired. Douglas was re-elected to the United States Senate. Ostensibly it was a Democratic victory but as Republican papers lost no time in pointing out, the result was really a victory for Lincoln and Republican principles. The old apportionment law to which Lincoln had alluded in his Springfield speech of July had won the day. According to it one thousand Republican votes were equal to seven hundred and fifty Democratic votes.⁽¹⁾ Consequently the Republicans claimed that Lincoln had a majority of at least ten thousand votes,⁽²⁾ that Douglas was shielded from the popular verdict of "want of confidence" by a Legislature that represented the sentiments of the minority. They went further and declared that Douglas won only by making concessions to the spirit of Freedom that was daily growing in the state⁽³⁾ and to which he had been forced to bow.⁽⁴⁾ It was a victory of Republican principles that were to prevail in the future. Illinois was a Republican state and would be in the foremost ranks of Republicanism in 1860 when the good seed that had been sown by⁽⁵⁾

(1) Chicago Press and Tribune, November 13, 1858.

(2) Chicago Press and Tribune, November 13, 1858.

(3) Chicago Democrat, November 6, 1858.

(4) Chicago Press and Tribune, November 10, 1858.

(5) Chicago Press and Tribune, November 5, 1858.

Lincoln would sprout. This good seed was the thorough discussion which the issues of the campaign had received. The Chicago Press and Tribune of September 14th states that the campaign had done much more toward the political enlightenment of the voters of Illinois than had ever been done in any previous canvass. It goes on to say: "The railroad facilities which nearly every portion of the state enjoys enables large masses to hear the discussions from the lips of the desputants while the verbatim reports of the debates find their way through the newspapers into the home of almost every citizen, affording him opportunity to treasure up and study carefully the facts brought to light and the principles for which each party is contending -- eminently advantageous to a good cause but terribly damaging to a bad one. Hence the Republican party has been constantly increasing in numerical strength and moral power from the opening of the campaign to the present time. Its principles have been clearly brought out by its leading men and contrasted with those which our opponents cherish to the depreciation of the latter in the public estimation. Our opponents have been forced to show their hands. They have been forced to admit the identity of their principles with those of the South Carolina nullifiers, that they hold to all the political heresies into which John C. Calhoun fell by reason of his monomania on the subject of slavery. They have been driven from their boasted refuge of Popular Sovereignty into the slough of Dred Scottism which is bound to be sooner or later, the slough of despond for every white man in Illinois who voluntarily puts foot into it. Our opponents have been clearly convicted and do not any longer have the face to deny it, of being a mere party of slavery propagandists,

the enemy of free labor and of the rights of all white men except they be slaveholders."

"In the meanwhile the principles of the Republicans have been freed from the odium which willful misrepresentation had long invested them in the minds of many. Thousands of our fellow citizens have gone home from these public discussions saying of the principles of our party, "If that be Republicanism then I have been a Republican all my life." They have found Republicanism to be made up of the best principles of the early fathers and sages of the Revolution and of the Republic, that it is reverent of law and of constitutional obligations, seeking only the accomplishment of what is right by lawful means, opposed to the infliction of a wrong upon any section, looking to the good of all and laboring zealously for the perpetuation of the Constitution and the Union."

The Democrats for their part considered the struggle one between Abolitionism and Democracy⁽¹⁾ in which the latter had won a sovereign triumph. It was a victory over sectionalism⁽²⁾ in which the back-bone of the Republican party had been broken. Douglas was the hero of the hour.

The attitude toward the Joint Debates was ordinarily highly commendatory. They were looked upon as literary masterpieces embodying the vital principles of the political system of the country at that day and of benefit to whomever read them whatever his convictions as to the questions at issue between the disputants.

However a constitutional question was at once raised as to

(1) Ohio Statesman, quoted in Chicago Times, November 10.

(2) Indianapolis Sentinel, quoted in Chicago Times, November 7.

whether the candidates for a Senatorial chair ought to appear before the people in an attempt to win it. Early in September the Washington Union⁽¹⁾ denounced Douglas for degrading the office of Senator by addressing the people of his own state in defence of his official conduct and in opposition to Republicanism. This fact^{of} itself would not be noticeable since the Washington Union was the bitter organ of the administration with whom Douglas had broken. But the same point was emphasized by other papers.

However the New York Tribune⁽²⁾ viewed the western mode of procedure with approval as "one which might well be more generally adopted". It voiced Greeley's attitude which he later expressed in his volume on Lincoln that the contest was "the most characteristic and at the same time most creditable incident in our national history"⁽³⁾.

The New York Herald and the New York Post were neutral. The former⁽⁴⁾ regarded it as "somewhat an anomaly for a Senator of the United States to be stumping the state and another who wishes to be Senator to follow in his wake, yet this it is at the present time in Illinois".

The Post⁽⁵⁾ regarded it as "singular and without a parallel in the history of electioneering campaigns in this country. I do not believe that another instance can be shown where two individuals have entered into a personal contest before the people for a seat in the United States Senate -- an office not directly in the gift of the people but their representatives".

(1) Aheahan, Douglas, 431.

(2) New York Tribune, September 4, 1858.

(3) Greeley on Lincoln, 32.

(4) New York Herald, July 27, 1858, Sparks' MS.

(5) New York Post, October 21, 1858, Sparks' MS.

A very hostile point of view was assumed by a "Philadelphia paper for which attorney Gen. Black wrote"⁽¹⁾, the Boston Advertiser, and the Cincinnati Commercial. The Philadelphia paper regarded it as a direct attack on the United States Constitution. "The late campaign in Illinois is justly liable to the criticism of a revolutionary effort to destroy the true intent and effort of the Constitution. This canvass was conducted on the principle that the people were to elect the United States Senator from Illinois and not the Legislature. It is vain to say that the members of the Legislature were to be elected by the people in this election and hence it was only a contest for members of the Legislature by each political party. But though the election is nominally for members of the State Legislature, the great interest, the great struggle, point and issue in this election was to elect Douglas or Lincoln to the Senate of the United States. This was the real issue. The election decided this question only and not who were to have the right, privilege and power of deciding, determining, and recording the fiat of the state on the question, consequent upon, but not directly resulting from this election of state officers or state agents,

In other words, by the mode of conducting this canvass in Illinois, result has been that the people and not their representatives, the Legislature, have elected a United States Senator. The spirit of the Constitution of the United States has been violated. A dangerous precedent has been established. The Constitution of the Union has been wounded, Its heart has been pierced by the poisoned arrow of political mockery."

(2) Chicago Times, November 16, 1858.

The Boston Advertiser protested⁽¹⁾ in behalf of the sovereignty of the states, the integral parts of the Union. "The campaign in that state is an anomaly in our politics. The election of a senator in all the states, must be made by the legislature, and it is not usual to anticipate the action of that body in the popular canvass. The friends of rival aspirants for senatorial honors have thought it time enough to begin to press their claims after the legislature had been elected, and have not undertaken to do so sooner. But in Illinois, this season, there were reasons of a different mode of proceeding."

"It would be unfortunate for the social and industrial interests of the states, if this mode of electing legislature solely or chiefly from regard to their votes for United States Senator, were to become general. The cunning of politicians has already engrafted upon the Constitution the excrescence of national conventions for the nomination of presidential candidates, whereby the province of the electoral colleges chosen in the several states under the forms of the Constitution is reduced to the automatic function of recording the foregone conclusions of the conventions. We should not like to see the legislatures generally reduced to the same poverty of dignity and duty."

The Ohio paper emphasized⁽²⁾ this last point commented on. It posed as the champion of the state legislature. "It is difficult to conceive of anything more illegitimate than a public canvass before the people by gentlemen seeking, as rival candidates, an office

(1) Boston Advertiser, November 6, 1858, Sparks' MS.

(2) Cincinnati Commercial, September 23, 1858, Sparks' MS.

that is not in the popular gift. The senatorial office is, under the provisions of the Constitution, the gift of a state as a whole through its instrument, the legislature. The Senator, therefore, according to the theory of Government, is the representative of the power of the state, as an independent polity and not of the will of the individual citizens, and any attempt to forestall the action of the Legislature either by party action or personal appeal to the people, in respect to his election, is contrary to that theory and an offense against the sovereignty whose freedom of action they thereby seek to fetter and control ." "The members of the coming Legislature of Illinois will be just as free to exercise their own will in the choice of a Senator as if neither Mr. Douglas or Mr. Lincoln had perignated the state from lake to river -- wrangling over what they are pleased to consider great national issues. They will still have the eminent men of the state from among whom to select the public servant; neither has any one of them the shadow of a moral right, by any form of pledge or promise, to anticipate the action of the deliberative body to which he belongs, or to restrain his own free agency as a member of the same."

Outside the state the effects of the campaign were even more noticeable than within. The newspapers, as they were either Democratic or Republican enumerated such general results as the overthrow of a sectional abolition party or the recognition of free principles. The New York Times declared⁽¹⁾ that the election had vitiated Seward's argument in his Rochester speech that the success of the Republican party in 1860 was absolutely necessary to prevent the restoration of the slave-trade, the establishment of

(1) Quoted in Chicago Times, November 9, 1858.

slavery in every portion of the Federal territory, in spite of the will of the people thereof, and the extension of slavery into the free states.

The Boston Advertiser rejoiced⁽¹⁾ that a "poignant rebuke" had been administered President Buchanan which might perhaps lead him to "stop and think what he is doing, where he is going and where he is carrying the country". They also considered it advantageous that the probable complexion of the next presidential campaign was exposed to view thus early. Otherwise the nation might have been inveigled by false pretensions into the support of Douglas for president to be cheated anew after the inauguration as it had been successively by Pierce and Buchanan. It concluded its editorial by stating that Mr. Douglas was an able political tactician but the Republicans must be more than ordinarily clumsy in conducting operations on their side if they now let Douglas to so manage affairs as to become the next president.

Perhaps the most far-reaching result of the contest was the creation of a national reputation for Lincoln. As the Republican organ in Chicago stated⁽²⁾, Lincoln "had been identified all his life long with the old Whig party, always in a minority in Illinois, and his fine abilities and attainments had necessarily been confined to a very limited sphere. He entered upon the canvass with a reputation confined to his own state, he closed it with his name a household word wherever the principles he holds are honored and with the respect of his opponents in all sections of the country".

The Boston paper just mentioned though not at all partial

(1) Boston Advertiser November 6, 1858, Sparks' MS.

(2) Chicago Press and Tribune October 29, 1858.

to Lincoln declared⁽¹⁾ that he proved himself a sound and able man by his speeches during the campaign. The Lowell(Mass.) Journal and Courier entertained the same opinion,⁽²⁾ "When Mr. Lincoln was first brought forward as the opposition champion, the Republicans, while they wished him success, yet were fearful of the result. He was to them comparatively unknown. But as the canvass progressed their fears disappear; they perceive his ability to cope with the "Little Giant" and the success which has attended his forensic efforts have exceeded their most sanguine expectations. The natural consequences of this contest will be to bring Mr. Lincoln more prominently before the people of the country, and if thoughts were made known it would not be surprising to hear that individuals were now calculating his fitness and chances for a more elevated position."

The Buffalo Courier, a strong Douglas advocate, eulogized⁽³⁾ Lincoln after the election. "Mr. Lincoln was the chosen standard-bearer of the opposition, in view of the possession of a combination of rare qualifications alike for the office and for achieving the success by which it might be secured. He is a man of firm abilities, of pure character, and of vast popularity with men of all classes and politics". Another ardent Democratic paper admits⁽⁴⁾ that Lincoln is able and does full justice to the bad cause he advocates."

(1) Boston Advertiser, November 6, 1858.

(2) August 30, 1858. Sparks' MS.

(3) Quoted in Chicago Times, November 9, 1858.

(4) Louisville Democrat, September 5, 1858. Sparks' MS.

As was perfectly natural, the Republican papers stinted neither words nor space in the praise of their candidate. One declared: ⁽¹⁾ "No man living has been a closer student of the great fundamental principles on which our government is based than Mr. Lincoln and in his numerous speeches throughout the state he has brought the result of that laborious study and the convictions of his natural reason and sober judgment before the people with an ability, a force, and an eloquence rarely equalled and that made a deep and ineradicable impression upon all who have heard him. No fact has been more apparent in the canvass than that Mr. Lincoln was more than a match for his opponent. In all the elements of statesmanship, in close compact, logical argument, in gentlemanly amenity, in the control of his temper under the severest provocation, in an unfailing fund of good nature -- in every quality, in short, that commends itself to the approbation of the better nature of man, on every occasion, he has loomed far above Mr. Douglas."

In the Chicago Democrat of November 11, 1858, appeared the statement that "Mr. Lincoln's name has been used by newspapers and public meetings outside the state in connection with the Presidency and Vice-presidency, so that it is not only in his own state that Honest old Abe is respected and his talents and many good qualities appreciated. All through the north and in most of the Border States he is looked upon as an able statesman and most worthy man, fully competent to any post within the gift of the people of this Union."

"We, for our part, consider that it would be but a partial appreciation of his services to our noble cause, that our next

(1) Chicago Press and Tribune, October 29, 1858.

Republican State Convention should nominate him for Governor as unanimously and enthusiastically as it did for Senator. And this state should also present his name to the National Republican Convention, first for President and next for Vice-President. We should show the United States at large that, in our opinion, the Great Man of Illinois is Abraham Lincoln and none other."

Four days later this assertion was re-iterated by the Tribune in the following manner: "Our busy Eastern contemporaries who have made Mr. Douglas the candidate for the Democrats are now busily engaged in fitting the Republicans with an article of the same sort. Some are for Seward, some are ^{for} Fremont; some are for Banks; some are for Chase; and, two or more of them have nominated Lincoln."

That this was the result of the Debates seems all the more credible when two newspaper items showing that Lincoln was not regarded even in his native state as a possible candidate for the presidential nomination, are taken into consideration. The Democrats did not deem him as so prominent for he is not mentioned in the list which the Chicago Times⁽¹⁾ considered as the probable Republican presidential nominees. It included Col. Fremont, Mr. Seward, Mr. Crittenden, Gov. Banks of Mass., Gov. Chase of Ohio, and Judge McLean of Illinois. The same was true of the men who enthusiastically proclaimed that Lincoln was their first and only choice as Senator. For a vote taken among the Republican Delegates to the Illinois State Convention stood as follows:⁽²⁾

William H. Seward - 139; John C. Fremont - 32; John McLean - 13; Lyman Trumbull - 7; S. P. Chase - 6; W. H. Bissell - 2; Scattering - 26.

(1) Quoted in Quincy White, July 21, 1858, Sparks' MS.

(2) Missouri Republican, June 24, 1858, Sparks' MS.

It was not only by elevating Lincoln that the debates altered Douglas' political position in the nation. The Quincy Whig on July 21, had asserted that the Chicago Times⁽¹⁾ postponed indefinitely the chances of Senator Douglas for the presidential nomination on account of his quarrel with the Administration. However, "the very moment the telegraph announced that Mr. Douglas had triumphed in Illinois that moment he became the favorite candidate of the Democratic people in this broad confederacy for the Presidency in 1860."⁽²⁾ Two days later the Douglas organ in Chicago quoted from the Hartford (Ct.) Press: "The contest in Illinois has been regarded on all hands as one of paramount interest and importance to the Democratic party. It seems to have been conceded that the triumph of the "Little Giant" would unquestionably settle the question as to success in 1860."

Very interesting is the attitude of the New York Tribune at the close of the contest -- the New York Tribune that had just five months previous advocated no opposition to Douglas.⁽³⁾

"It was manifest that Douglas' triumph would render^{inevitable} his nomination for next President at Charleston in 1860. He must either be nominated or the Democratic party practically retires from the contest, surrendering the Government to the Republicans".

"And now that Mr. Douglas is in the full flush of hard-won, brilliant, conclusive triumph, we tell him that his late

(1) Sparks' MS.

(2) Buffalo Republic and Times quoted in Chgo. Times, Nov. 10, 1858.

(3) New York Tribune, November 9, 1858.

canvass, though a successful, has not been a truly brave and noble one -- that though it may carry him into the White House, it has not exalted him in the estimation of thoughtful, discerning, conscientious, truly patriotic men whose opinion is worth having though it may not waft its object into the Presidential chair."

"We are not complaining of the positions with regard to slavery and the related topics which Mr. Douglas has seen fit to take in prosecution of his canvass. We know that men -- not men of the highest type but such men as for the most part make up the world we live in -- are creatures of circumstances, taking and maintaining such positions as their necessities and supposed interests dictate. If then, it had seemed necessary to Mr. Douglas to advocate the re-opening of the African slave trade, we should not have complained if he had done so. When it had been settled that the Republicans of Illinois would determinedly oppose Mr. Douglas' re-election at all hazards, it was obvious that he would feel constrained to take a position so near the South Pole as would be necessary to prevent the formation of any considerable Buchanan Democratic party so as to inclose him between two fires. Yet we must confess that we were not quite prepared to see him take the positions in the canvass which "The South" pretty accurately sums up as follows:

(1) Judge Douglas affirms the original and essential inferiority of the negro.

(2) He denies that the negro was intended to be embraced within the abstractions of the Declaration of Independence and asserts that the right of freedom and equality was predicated only by the dominant race of white men.

(3) He denies the privileges of citizenship to the negro.

(4) He affirms the compatibility of a confederacy of the Free and Slave States and the possibility of their harmonious co-existence under a common constitution.

(5) He affirms the absolute sovereignty of the state in respect to their domestic institutions and denies the authority of the Federal Government to discriminate against the interests of slavery.

(6) He inculcates a policy of non-intervention as between the free and slave-hold state as well as between the latter and the Federal Government.

(7) He supports the decision of the Supreme Court and asserts for slavery the right of colonization in the Territories.

(8) He upholds all the guaranties of the Federal Constitution in respect to the rights of the South.

(9) He maintains the dignity and independence of the Senatorial function against the encroachments of executive usurpation.

(10) He protests his opposition to Black Republicanism at every point and upon every principle.

(11) He pledges himself to fidelity to the organic principles and nominees of the Democratic party."

"If South Carolina should object to a candidate for President who plants himself on that platform she must be fastidious indeed."

"But it is not in this respect that Mr. Douglas' canvass has fallen most signally below out expectations. With his indefatigable energy, his readiness in repartee, his tenacity -- if we should not rather say his audacity -- in maintaining an exposed

and indefensible position, his fertility of resource, we were already familiar. But his recent canvass, while it has stamped him first among county and ward politicians, has evinced a striking absence of the far higher qualities of statesmanship. His speeches have lacked the breadth of view, the dignity, the courtesy to his opponent which - not to speak here of Clay, Calhoun, and Webster -- we should look for in the popular addresses of Crittenden or Corwin or Wise or Quitman -- proscribed by the official leaders of his party and appealing from them to his constituents. They are plainly addressed to an excited crowd at some railway station and seem uttered in unconsciousness that the whole American People are virtually deeply interested though not intensely excited auditors. They are volcanic and scathing but lack the repose of conscious strength, the calmness of conscious right. They lack forecast and are utterly devoid of faith. They not merely assume as an axiom that "God is on the side of the strongest battalions", they make the "God" or at least fail to recognize any other. That such a struggle were better nobly lost than ignobly won is a truth of which Senator Douglas on the stump would seem not to have the faintest conception. Hence his late canvass while it has given him an exalted rank among mere politicians, and probably paved his way to the next Presidency -- or more strictly, to the next Democratic nomination for that post -- has failed to elicit any evidence of his possessing those lofty and admirable qualities without which the Presidency can afford no heartfelt satisfaction and confer no enduring fame."

But Douglas' political success depended on more than Northern sentiment and Northern approval. It was for this reason

that the Joint Debates have always been regarded as so momentous. Through the "Freeport heresy" that a Territorial government, notwithstanding the Dred Scott Decision, could prohibit slavery either by unfriendly legislation or by withholding police regulation Douglas assumed a position entirely different from what he had held for the previous eight years and from that the Democrats who heartily supported the Supreme Court maintained. He had advanced this novel theory even before questioned by Lincoln at Freeport. It is found in his Bloomington and Springfield Speeches of July 16th and 17th Lincoln was present at the time and consequently knew Douglas' new position. Yet two weeks later he wrote to Henry Asbury, ⁽¹⁾ "The points you propose to press upon Douglas he will be very hard to get up to, but I think you labor under a mistake when you say no one cares how he answers. This implies that it is equal with him whether he is injured here or at the South. That is a mistake. He cares nothing for the South, he knows he is already dead there. He only leans Southward more to keep the Buchanan party from growing more in Illinois. You shall have hard work to get him directly to the point whether a territorial legislature has or has not the power to exclude slavery. But if you succeed in bringing him to it -- though he will be compelled to say it has no such power -- he will instantly take ground that slavery cannot actually exist in the Territories unless the people desire it and so give it protection by territorial legislation. If this offends the South he will let it offend them as at all events he means to hold on to his chances in Illinois."

Lincoln saw his chance. He played upon this momentary indifference of Douglas to Southern sentiment. He knew that with-

(1) Lincoln's Works (N & H) III, 198.

out the support of that sentiment Douglas would never gain the Presidential chair. The people of Illinois knew this new doctrine as the two speeches in which it was pronounced had been spread broadcast throughout the state. The Freeport doctrine had been heard by the Illinois voters for better or worse. Lincoln knew that it alone would save for Douglas the votes of those who hated slavery. He was, as he himself said, "after larger game." He wanted to reach the people beyond Illinois who did not know the Bloomington and Springfield speeches. They could be touched only by something said in Joint Debates which were eagerly watched and carefully commented on by all the large journals of the country. If Douglas could be induced to repeat his doctrine of unfriendly legislation in one of the debates of the series, a strong universal sentiment concerning the man nearest the Democratic presidential nomination would be created which if hostile, as it was sure to be South of the Potomac, would prevent him from reaching the White House. It was for this reason that Lincoln on the 27th of August asked Douglas that second question the effects of which, tradition tells us, were so much dreaded by his friends and co-workers.

The result was what Lincoln had predicted. It saved Douglas at home; it destroyed him abroad. Notwithstanding the Republican organs to the contrary, the doctrine of unfriendly legislation was received with applause by the Illinois Democrats. Joseph Medill states⁽¹⁾ that "the Democratic papers all over northern Illinois quoted and applauded Douglas' triumphant reply to Mr. Lincoln's interrogatory. The Chicago Democrat, though it had

(1) Chicago Tribune, May 9, 1895. Sparks' MS.

daily asserted that many Douglas men were "caving in on the Freeport speech" finally admitted⁽¹⁾ that it helped Douglas to many votes in the Central portions of the state. The Douglas organ at Springfield, as well as the one at Chicago, endorsed it heartily.⁽²⁾

"In all his speeches Douglas has announced his escence in all that the Supreme Court really decided. Even on points in the opinion in which he not entirely concurred, he has declared it the duty of every good citizen to submit to the decision of this legal tribunal in the land. He has urged, and powerfully urged, that the attack on the Supreme Court was an attack on the government the foundations of which our fathers so carefully laid; that the attempts to disturb that decision in a manner proposed by Lincoln and his associates was as reckless as it was ridiculous."

"There are no inconsistencies in Judge Douglas' course with regard to the Dred Scott Decision. The Supreme Court has decided that Congress does not posses the power to prohibit slavery in the territories, and that not possessing the power, Congress of course could not grant the power to territorial legislatures, but the Supreme Court has not yet decided that the people of a territory do not possess the power independent of the action of Congress. In this country the doctrine is that power to do any act comes from the people, and is not given to the people by Congress. The Court may decide the constitutional question hereafter against the right of the people of a territory to exclude slavery. They have not yet so decided. Judge Douglas has, in all his speeches, shown, and in none more clearly than in the one delivered at Bloom-

(1) Chicago Democrat, November 6, 1858.

(2) State Register, September 2, 1858.

ington that however the constitutional questions may be decided, yet it will be but an abstract question, and that, for all practical purposes, the power to exclude is just as absolute, by withholding that territorial legislation which is necessary to protect the rights of the master, as it could be by a positive prohibition. That such would be the consequence of legislation, or refusal to legislate on the subject of slavery, every sensible man admits, and none knew it better than Lincoln and his associates, who are seeking power by unscrupulous agitation of this question, and unprincipled perversion of the views and expressed opinions of those differing with them."

Beyond the borders of the state it immediately provoked a storm. In the North and South it was regarded as both anti-slavery and pro-slavery. The St. Louis News and Intelligencer⁽¹⁾ evidently considered it the former. "Lincoln is no more anti-slavery than Douglas. Since their Freeport Speeches we regard Mr. Lincoln as holding grounds quite as conservative in regard to slavery in the Territories as Judge Douglas."

So also did the Democracy of Massachusetts who in a mass meeting adopted the following resolution:⁽²⁾

"Resolved: that any suggestion emanating from any source, affirming that the constitutional rights of the people of a state or Territory can be by "lawful means" obliterated or withheld by non-action on the part of the law making power, is based upon a looseness of political morals, a faithlessness to constitutional obligations, repulsive to the sense of the democracy of the Union."

⁽³⁾
The Washington Union considered it as bad as a Republican

(1) Quoted in State Journal October 5, 1858.

(2) State Journal, Oct. 7, 1858. (3) Washington Union, Sept. 4, 1858

doctrine. It argued Douglas declared the power of a Territory to legislate in an unfriendly manner "given" by Congress in the Nebraska Bill yet how could Congress give a power which it does not itself possess."

In the South it was regarded, for the most part, as a doctrine radically hostile to slavery. Such was the attitude of the Louisville Journal.⁽¹⁾ It preferred Lincoln's doctrine of Congressional control of the Territories, though a serious error, to Douglas' silly, disgusting exhibition of ignorance and duplicity," to the "scurviest possible form of the scurviest of all heresies, popular sovereignty." It declared the doctrine utterly and astoundingly false. "No friend to the constitutional rights of the South, or manly public dealings can or will tolerate it for an instant. It is a most vile and miserable and unmitigable heresy. Senator Douglas in publicly espousing it, goes several lengths before the most intense and passionate Republicans in the North. It would be difficult, in fact, to imagine a doctrine on the subject that would not be abolitionism itself which as respects the Territories has never in its highest fury assumed such radical grounds as Douglas took in his Freeport speech. Garrison, with all his fanatical and demoniacal hatred of slavery has never in his whole life uttered an opinion at once so insulting and injurious to the South. The force of unscrupulous northern demagogism seems spent in this last expedient of the unscrupulous little demagogue of Illinois."

The Frankfort(Ky.) Commonwealth after proving the falsity of Mr. Lincoln's position on slavery in the Territories stated that⁽²⁾ that of Douglas was, if possible more objectionable.

(2) Frankfort(Ky.) Commonwealth, September 7, 1858. Sparks' MS.

(1) Quoted in State Journal, September 7, 1858. Sparks' MS.

(3) Chicago Press and Tribune, November 25, 1858.

Jefferson Davis declared ^{(3) p. 72} the doctrine more unbearable than the Wilmot Proviso and the positions of Mr. Lincoln and Mr. Douglas equally destructive of the rights of the South, both at war with the Constitution.

A position somewhat less bitter was taken by the Wilmington (N.Ca.) Journal. ⁽⁴⁾ "This doctrine of unfriendly legislation is at variance with the principles laid down by the Supreme Court in the Dred Scott Case, with those avowed by the President in his annual message, with the whole Southern Democracy. It is in our opinion, radically unsound. It does not begin to do for our use."

The Columbia (So. Ca.) Guardian rejoiced ⁽¹⁾ that "Judge Douglas' Freeport speech is being met with the proper spirit. If the Democratic party did not make a support of the Dred Scott decision an indispensable feature of its platform, then it would deserve the contempt of the whole country."

Of all the southern papers, the Richmond Enquirer alone seemed to defend ⁽²⁾ the "heresy" and it seems to have hardly understood the exposition aright. "Our advices from Illinois are of the most cheering description. The coalesced opposition have been fairly beaten on every issue started either on the stump or through the press. They have not scrupled to resort to the most dishonorable dodges. Among these stands the ludicrous attempt to construe Judge Douglas' speech at Freeport into a Squatter Sovereignty Anti-Dred Scott pronouncement. The Illinois Statesman never did better service to the constitutional rights of the South than will be effected by following up the frank and manly suggestions of that

(1) Quoted in Washington Union, September 16, 1858. Sparks' MS.

(2) Richmond Enquirer, September 10, 1858.

speech. It repeats that the present state of Federal legislation is entirely inadequate for the thorough and effectual protection of slave property in the Territories." "Slavery is not a mere institution of property. It is in itself a separate element of patriarchal government. Peculiar in all its nature, it requires a peculiar adaptation of municipal law for its healthy maintenance." "Territorial Legislatures may, notwithstanding the full recognition of the Dred Scott Decision and the Kansas-Nebraska Bill, by lawful means, practically exclude slavery from a Territory before it becomes a State. We say this may be done by lawful means. This should be properly understood. We do not say, nor does Senator Douglas say, that Protection may be thus withheld from slave property without a violation of the spirit of the Constitution. The point to be considered is where does the burden of this violation by omission finally rest. Not with the Territorial Legislature. That body may fairly and legally refuse to accept a responsibility which Congress itself declines to incur. Members of Congress have no right to shift this responsibility from their own shoulders to that of their Territorial delegates. The Constitution requires that slave property shall be protected in the Territories and it is the business of Congress to furnish that protection directly and immediately. If members of Congress attempt to avoid this responsibility and then attempt to complain, of a similar avoidance on the part of Territorial authorities the latter can meet them with the prompt and conclusive rejoinder: "Do it yourself."

"This is the state of affairs demonstrated by Senator Douglas' Freeport speech and this is all . He has come boldly forward to point out to Southern men the exact locality and nature of

the nuisance to which they are subjected. He has proclaimed the truth that the Kansas-Nebraska Act and the Dred Scott Decision are of themselves insufficient for the protection of slave property in the Territories. Have we no reason to be thankful for this lesson? It is true teaching and it behooves southern men to heed the only just conclusion to be drawn from it. Congress must intervene to protect slavery in the Territories. Let us put our shoulders to the wheel and labor earnestly, faithfully and prudently for the consummation of this constitutional necessity."⁽¹⁾

In the Senate the opposition to the "Freeport Heresy" was strong. It found only one advocate, Senator Pugh of Ohio, who declared the doctrine was held by the vast majority of Democrats in the North.⁽²⁾ No sooner had the Senate convened than Douglas was deprived of his seat as chairman of the Committee on Territories which he had held for eleven years. Jefferson Davis expressed⁽³⁾ the sentiments of the body when he declared that he thought it proper that Douglas should be removed when he became unfit to be the organ of the Democratic majority in the Senate. One Senator after another denounced Douglas' position declaring it false to pledges, an electioneering scheme, and a perversion of the Constitution. Mason of Virginia predicted the action of the Charleston Democratic Convention when he said that no party on that doc-

(1) The Chicago Press and Tribune, November 24, 1858, states that the Richmond Enquirer had taken a new position declaring that the South could not repose under the Freeport speech.

(2) Speech in Senate, December 19, 1859.

(3) Speech in Senate, January 12, 1860.

trine could receive one vote south of the Potomac River. They had asked for bread and been given a stone, for fish and received a serpent. To test the attitude of the Senate, Davis, February 2, 1860, introduced several resolutions. Of these the fourth was directed against the doctrine of unfriendly legislation. When the vote was taken it was sustained by thirty-five yeas against twenty-one nays. All the yeas were Democrats except two, who were Americans; all the nays were Republicans except one who was a Democrat, Pugh of Phio. From the nature of the resolution, which also denied the right of Congress to prohibit slavery in the Territories, the Republicans had no choice but to vote in the negative.

Yet the vote of the northern Democrats in the conservative Senate seems hardly to have voiced the attitude of the North toward the Freeport doctrine if the vote of the more recently elected delegates to the Charleston Convention is taken into consideration. On the 23rd of April the committee on the platform split on that very principle. The majority embodied in the resolutions Davis' fourth resolution which the northern minority members would not accept. They sustained Douglas on the Cincinnati platform. When the two platforms were submitted to the Convention Douglas was sustained by one hundred and sixty-five votes to one hundred and thirty-eight. Twelve delegates from the slave states favoring Douglas and thirty from the North voting against him. The latter, however, were the tools of Buchanan and not the representatives of their states. Nevertheless the schism which Lincoln had foreseen had come to pass. His prediction had been fulfilled. Douglas

(1) Rhodes, History of the United States II, 450.

could not propound his doctrine of unfriendly legislation at Freeport and be president in 1860. Thus it is that all historians unite in saying the Lincoln-Douglas Debates made Lincoln president.

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